



State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MICHAEL R. STYLER
Executive Director

Division of Wildlife Resources

JAMES F. KARPOWITZ
Division Director

5/023/0058
cc: Wayne
Dana

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Div. of Oil, Gas & Mining

June 21, 2012

John Baza
Director
Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining
P.O. Box 145801
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Dear Mr. Baza,

The Division of Wildlife Resources requests the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the reclamation of an inactive peat mining operation which poses a risk to valuable fish and wildlife resources. The site in question is located near the town of Mills, UT and is operated by Bonnie Birch Jensen (Permit No. S0230058). The mine site is located approximately 300 meters upstream (south) of the state owned Mills Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The site is currently inactive but several pieces of machinery, storage tanks, and barrels of unknown contents remain on site. Improperly stored machinery and equipment pose a direct risk to water quality (and fish and wildlife) within the watershed.

The Mills Valley wetland complex (including the WMA and mining site) is composed of numerous spring fed perennial wetlands which are inhabited by several sensitive species including Least Chub, Long-Billed Curlew, and Southern Leatherside Chub. The Mills Valley wetland complex represents one of the five remaining viable populations of Least Chub in the United States. Least Chub are currently classified by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a Candidate Species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Impacts or threats to remaining Least Chub habitat could prompt the USFWS to initiate an emergency listing under ESA. The majority of the wetland complex is connected via surface and subsurface flow. Any impacts to water quality within the mining site have the potential to spread throughout the entire watershed and significantly impact wildlife.

The Division of Wildlife Resources views the protection of habitat within the Mills Valley as a high priority for our native aquatics program. We would like the opportunity to meet with your agency and other interested parties to develop a reclamation plan for the site and discuss funding options for the project.

Sincerely,

John Fairchild
Regional Supervisor

cc: Chris Crockett, Aquatic Biologist UDWR; Wayne Western, Environmental Scientist OGM

